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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 002411

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/PPC, WHA/USOAS, AND WHA/CEN
NSC FOR DAN FISK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2015

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN PRESIDENTIAL HORSERACE OVER: SOMEONE

PLEASE TELL THE HORSES - VACUUM OF INFORMATION/LEADERSHIP

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2393 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Ford;
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. Liberal Party presidential candidate Manuel "Mel" Zelaya continues to wait to claim victory in spite of several independent sources that show that he won by over 5 percent over National Party presidential candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo. Formal, public recognition of a Zelaya victory has not been made and pressure on Ambassador continue from the Nationalist Party to refrain from doing so until the official count is in. Although an excited group of Nationalists protested outside the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) the evening of November 28 chanting "Count the Vote!" Honduras continues to remain calm in spite of continuing delays in official vote counts. End Summary.

2. (SBU) On the evening of November 28, National Party presidential candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo rallied his party at his party's headquarters before releasing the group of 400 to 500 people to the streets. The group, though not violent, was clearly overly excited and could not be controlled by Nationalist Party President Gilberto Goldstein. In an attempt to calm the group, Goldstein announced "We have victory!" since the TSE announced it would start the vote counting at 10:00pm local. About 300 demonstrators moved to the main street of Tegucigalpa after leaving the TSE. Police blocked both ends of the street and the rally continued without incident.

3. (SBU) By 8:15am November 29 the TSE had tabulated 1,489 tables out of the national 13,869, roughly 11 percent, mostly from the greater Tegucigalpa area, but had not yet publicly released the information. The TSE had announced that the magistrates would hold a press conference at 11:00am to release these initial numbers, but in the end, this press conference was postponed until this afternoon. Goldstein and Liberal Party President Patricia Rodas reportedly held a shouting match at the TSE temporary vote count center. A press conference was held at 3:00pm showing that the TSE now had tabulated 2,649 tables (roughly 19 percent). The National Party and Christian Democrat Party magistrates were present; the Liberal Party TSE President was not. The TSE warehouse is reporting that they now have 75 percent of the ballots in from roughly 14 of the departments, a good sign of progress.

4. (C) At 7:30am on November 29 Ambassador met with Lobo at the Residence. Although the meeting was to have been one-on-one, Lobo brought with him National Congressional candidate and key party official David Matamoros and political consultant Mark Klugman. The Ambassador brought up the TSE and OAS Quick Count numbers and asked Lobo if he had any other information or statistical surveys showing that he was ahead. Lobo and his team had no reply. Ambassador emphasized that the OAS had informed the Embassy that the OAS Quick Count has been accurate all 44 times it has been employed. Lobo did say that he would not concede until enough votes had been counted. Klugman went further, handing the Ambassador a copy of the Nationalists' talking points arguing why a Nationalist Party president would supposedly be better for the USG than a Liberal Party president. The document is similar to previous points passed to USG officials in past meeting with the National Party. (Note: The afternoon/evening of November 28 senior National Party officials and Klugman spoke with PolChief to vehemently express their concerns that no public vote count had been released, criticizing the TSE, and encouraging the Embassy not to make what they termed any premature statement about a Zelaya victory. End Note.)

5. (C) At 9:30am on November 29 Ambassador met alone with Zelaya at the residency. He cautioned Zelaya to temper his rhetoric in regards to Lobo, President Ricardo Maduro, and the National Party. Zelaya had tipped off the press that he was meeting with the Ambassador and was greeted by a large group of reporters at the gate to the residence after the meeting. Zelaya did not reveal to the press the details of his meeting, but talked about the electoral situation. Zelaya canceled a planned November 29 trip to El Salvador; Salvadoran President Saca had already called to congratulate

Zelaya. Press reports also indicate that Roman Catholic Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez called Zelaya from Europe to congratulate him.

16. (C) There have been a flurry of phone calls from both parties expressing concern and seeking progress. On the afternoon/evening of November 28:
-Ambassador spoke with Special Representative of the OAS Secretary General and former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras

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Frank Almaguer.

-Ambassador spoke with Honduran President Maduro. Ambassador emphasized his concern of the situation and encouraged Maduro to step up and assist his country during this tense time with a more explicit public statement indicating the election reality. Although he asked Maduro to phone him back, several hours later former Honduran President Raphael Callejas called instead to discuss the situation with the Ambassador. Former Honduran President Carlos Flores also spoke with Ambassador.
-National Party senior advisors called PolChief before, during, and after the above demonstration to both assure Post that the demonstration was peaceful and to express concern over the vote count situation.

-Liberal Party senior advisors also called PolChief to express concern over the Nationalist rally.

The morning/afternoon of November 29:

-Ambassador spoke with President Maduro. Maduro said the National Party was meeting again on the situation.

-Ambassador spoke with Ambassador Almaguer. The OAS issued a public statement this afternoon concerning the situation.

17. (C) Although the press is reporting that former Minister of Public Security and senior National Party member Oscar Alvarez is returning to his position, EmbOff received word that he would not be going back to the Ministry. (Note: If this is indeed true, it could be an important show of acceptance by the Nationalist Party that the Liberals won. End Note.)

18. (C) Comment: Although it is obvious to everyone, including both parties and presidential candidates, that Mel Zelaya and his Liberal Party won the presidential elections, the public drama continues. Pressure is mounting from both sides, though more so from the Nationalist Party, for the TSE to finalize the vote count. It appears that until this is done, the nail biting, sitting and waiting, and praying for continued calm will continue. Neither President Maduro nor the TSE has shown leadership on this issue, forcing the OAS to try to do so partly by issuing a press release the afternoon of November 29. End Comment.
Ford